Ishmael Dana Hayden—June 3 1949 to February 21 2026—Biography by Amanuensis

Dana was born in Needham, Mass, as Charles Allan Moore. His family was tense, controlled, and serious, and, although non-violent, it was not a place of laughter, affection, or encouragement. Children were not the focus of the family, and no family portraits were ever taken. Dana could never understand or accept this, and, from the age of twelve, he loathed his father. He was a precocious genius. His oppressive childhood squelched his sensitive, creative, inquisitive, and loving nature, and he grew up without friends, unable to have stable relationships of any kind. He lived his entire life in loneliness which, at times, became excruciating.

In high school, Dana's summer job was able-bodied seaman on the Windjammer tall ship that sailed out of Martha's Vineyard with vacationers for week long trips. He was strong, and he did the heavy labor of climbing the masts to furl the sails. He was also a skilled carpenter.

Even though his father traveled the world for Raytheon and for the Pentagon, when Dana received his draft notice in 1967 at the age of 18 during the Vietnam war, he took a hunting rifle into his bedroom and fired it through his foot; he chose to maim himself to be rejected by the military system. He was sent to a psychiatrist who told his mother he was highly intelligent and completely uncooperative with any efforts to reach his mind. He lived on his own terms, never fitting into society except to earn money for travel.

Dana attended the University of Michigan to study naval architecture and marine engineering. He dropped out of engineering because he "couldn't operate a mechanical pencil" and transferred to art history, where almost all the other students were women. Dana graduated from the University of Michigan with a BA in Art History.

Dana dreamed of sailing to the Caribbean, and kept a list of all the people who said he would not succeed. He followed his dream, and he built a 24-foot, one ton Tanenui catamaran in his back yard. Dana took to sea in his homemade boat and sailed, single-handed, from Boston to the Caribbean. He sailed from Boston to Bermuda, then to the Virgin Islands, reaching Cruz Bay Harbor, St. John, in 1974 after more than 300 hours at sea. By the time he reached the Virgin Islands, his boat was battered from storms, he was covered with boils, and his vision was impaired by the constant salt spray. He was 25 years old. Dana mailed postcards to all the people who said he would not succeed.

While repairing his boat and recovering, he worked in the shipyard that belonged to the Rockefeller Rock Resort. He wrote to the neighbor across the street, but not to his family. When he returned, two years later, his family did not welcome him. As always, he went upstairs to his room and quietly closed the door. His family never asked about his adventure, either before or after, and they never acknowledged his bravery, fortitude, intelligence, and inner strength.

He estranged himself from his father and legally changed his name from Charles Allan Moore to Ishmael Dana Hayden. *Ishmael*, after the narrator of *Moby Dick*, who survived his ship's sinking by clinging to a coffin. *Dana*, after Richard Henry Dana, 1815-1882, a lawyer and politician from Massachusetts and the author of the sailing memoir *Two Years Before the Mast*. *Hayden*, after Sterling Hayden, 1916-1986, an actor and sailor who, at the peak of his earning power, spurned the movie industry and his ex-wife, and set sail for Tahiti in the schooner *Wanderer* with his children and friends, writing an autobiography of the same name. Because his father controlled access to his mother, Dana became estranged from his entire family. He never married or had children.

Dana sold his handmade boat to a doctor from Maine. He signed a two year contract to work in Jeddah, building plywood forms for pouring concrete at the King Abdul-Aziz International Airport. When he returned to Boston, he became a salesman, and he would work as a salesman for the rest of his life, first as a stationery salesman, then as a real estate broker, then as an insurance agent, and then as a Series 7 stockbroker for a financial company. He was a dapper dresser who stood out for his fashion choices, but up close he could look like he was made of wood—anxious and tense.

The financial company had a discount with the health club next door, so Dana enjoyed a gym, pool, hot tub, and bar-restaurant with a view sixty stories up. He spent seven years lifting weights. His weight was 73 kg at 160 cm (160 lbs at 5'3")—overweight but not obese. In 1991, at 42, Dana discovered he had a slow-growing form of prostate cancer. At 43, Dana had a heart attack, so he quit the gym, took up roller-skating, and began lifetime medication. He roller-skated all over Boston, and he kept roller-skating into his sixties.

In 2000, at 52, Dana rediscovered Thailand, which he had first visited as a child with his family. He lived in Phuket for two years as the owner of a small tourist shop, then moved to Jomtien. After a year in Jomtien, Dana returned to Boston and became a salesman for Lexus and other luxury cars. "Dana in America" visited Thailand frequently and began to write essays for the Stickman Bangkok website in May.

At 57, in addition to cancer, Dana had malignant hypertension, occluded arteries, a posterior myocardial infarction, and bacterial infections, and he began to have problems with his mobility and balance. In addition to writing for Stickman, he started writing on Dean Barrett's website. Twice, he ignored his heart medication and found himself in the back of an ambulance. Dana began to think about reincarnation, and he wished to be reborn as Dean Barrett.

In 2008, at 59, Dana made his last trip to Thailand, grounded by lack of money and poor health. Dana had such a store of experiences that he kept writing about Thailand for five more years while most readers had no idea he no longer visited Thailand. He also began publishing essays on Thailand Stories. After the financial crisis, Dana could no longer find work as a luxury car salesman. He got a part time job in a university bookstore, selling books. A lightning storm destroyed his computer, and from then on he used computers in the library and the hospital.

In 2012, at 63, CT, MRI, and nuclear scans and a biopsy confirmed his cancer was metastatic and spreading.

In 2013, Dana stopped writing. For thousands of readers, there would be no more reading Dana on a Sunday morning with a cup of coffee. Dana had published 890,000 words—1,600 words every week for 10-1/2 years. Writing for his weekly readers had been Dana's life, and he said the were the happiest years of his life. By writing, anonymously, Dana came the closest he could come to sharing his life with anyone, but it was all one way; Dana was uninterested in what others had to say about themselves, and readers who attempted to become pen-pals with him were always disappointed.

In 2015, Dana compiled his *magnum opus*, *Thai Thoughts and Anecdotes: The Anthology—The Complete Works of Dana 2003-2013*. Download from the Internet Archive at: "https://archive.org/details/ThaiThoughtsandAnecdotesTheAnthology".

In 2018, Dana's cancer had spread to his bones. He began stage four.

In 2020, Dana began to suffer falls. He looked back on his life and said, “I can not believe how lucky I was to have enjoyed the golden era of Bangkok nightlife. Now that I am sick, sometimes it all seems like a dream.” He no longer walked to the library to access the Internet. He stayed home and went offline.

In 2021, Dana stopped taking his cancer pills because of the side effects and let nature take its course.

In 2022, Dana reread his life’s work and reckoned that his best essays in his anthology are: *Madness of Love*, *Acceptance and Happiness and Love*, *A Good Place to Die*, *Inventory Amusements*, *Time to Start Running*, *A Western Woman*, *It’s All Relative: Family Man in Essan*, *Pattaya Bound*, *Science Fiction*, and *Happy or Sad*.

In 2026, Dana died, in Boston. He left his writing, and his estranged sister and nieces.